

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

26TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 24, 2001

Contact: Kevin O'Connell
202-225-6335

HINCHEY SPONSORS BILL TO IMPROVE CARE FOR AREA VETS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) on Wednesday will introduce legislation that would require the Veterans Administration to change the way it allocates funding to its hospitals and clinics. The current Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) formula has not adequately funded VA facilities in the Northeast.

"VERA simply provides more funding to areas of the country that have more veterans," said Hinchey. "But the formula fails to account for regional differences in the costs of providing and obtaining health care. As a result, the facilities that treat veterans in our area of the country have not received their fair share of resources."

Hinchey will be a primary sponsor of two bills that will be introduced on Wednesday. The first, called the Veterans Equal Treatment Act, would repeal the VERA formula, and give the VA one year to develop a new formula that is based on need. The second bill is called the Equitable Care for All Veterans Act and would direct the VA to devise and implement a plan to account for regional differentials as part of the VERA allocation formula. If, after two years, funding is still allocated in an inequitable manner nationally, the VA would be required to discard VERA and devise a new funding allocation formula.

"Veterans in our region deserve access to the same quality of medical care as veterans in other parts of the country, but they're being penalized because of where they live," Hinchey added. "Despite enrollment increases, we have lost funding every year since VERA went into effect in 1997. This legislation would require the VA to correct this injustice."